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ABSTRACT

Two areas of school-university collaboration in the University of New Hampshire 5-year program of teacher education are collaborative research and collaborative supervision. This paper discusses how teachers, school administrators, and university faculty work together on research and supervision issues in teacher education. In considering issues important in school-university collaborative research, the first one examined is the relationship between school context and the collaborative research being conducted. The second issue involves questions of project control and leadership. A description is given of the two models of supervision that are being used. In one model, a cooperating teacher assumes major responsibility for coordinating the teachers and interns within the school. Another school, using an egalitarian model, has all cooperating teachers meet regularly as a group with the university supervisor in order to address specific questions of intern supervision. Products of the project are briefly described, and intended outcomes are suggested. (JD)

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SOME PROMISING ENDEAVORS IN SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION: COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND COLLABORATIVE SUPERVISION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FIVE - YEAR PROGRAM

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There are six areas of school-university collaboration in the University of New Hampshire Five-Year Program of Teacher Education: program planning, instruction of courses, early field experiences, cluster placement of interns, collaborative research, and collaborative supervision. My remarks today address the last two focus areas, describing how teachers, school administrators, and university faculty work together on research and supervision issues in teacher education.

SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

I have been working with the schools in a collaborative research mode for the last ten years. Characteristics of collaborative research include the following.

1) Teachers and university faculty join together with the goals of improving practice, contributing to educational theory, and providing staff development.

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2) This form of action research is carried out in teams which may or may not be school based.

3) Each team reaches consensus on a group project which addresses its members' concerns; then the team uses a recursive process of action research in carrying out its project.

4) In most projects, teams publish or present the results of their studies.

5) The projects themselves are documented and analyzed by researchers who look for insights into the processes of effective action research. (Oja and Smulyan, 1988)

Collaborative Research: The Action Research on Change in Schools Project

In my work with collaborative research I have been most interested in the developmental processes; the relationships among participant's developmental stages, action research in schools, and individual teacher change. A recent project funded by the National Institute of Education from 1981-83 was called Action Research on Change in Schools (ARCS). As teachers and university participants studied a problem in their school, I also observed the process of collaborative research. I was both participant (providing research guidance and group facilitation) and observer (gathering data on the team's process). I'd like to share some of the outcomes that might apply in other situations.

The school/university research team I worked on was based in a junior high school, five teachers and one university researcher (myself) and a doctoral student who helped document the process of collaboration. I found that it was important for the school based team that the school context and history of school change were discussed by the team as the research topic was developed. (In fact, there was no way teachers would

leave this out of the meeting time; here was an opportunity for the teachers to talk professionaly about school issues.) I was, therefore, able to look at participants' perceptions of the organizational and school context as we worked in the collaborative research team over a period of two years. The teachers used an action research methodology to first identify their problems with scheduling in the junior high and then redefine and make more specific their research question based on analysis of new data and fact finding at different points in the two year project. The problem was defined as: 'Organizational changes at the junior high and their effect on teacher morale.' Research methods included questionnaires, interviews, analysis of previous research on school scheduling, and statistical analyses of data.

Together teachers and university participants wrote and co-authored the reports of findings. Together we participated in national and regional dissemination activities. And together we grew from the experience. Teachers developed research competencies, felt more able to solve their own problems, and renew themselves professionally, and we in the university reeducated ourselves in field based research methodologies, particularly learning how research findings are used and modified in solving school problems.

I was particularly interested in the relationship of developmental stages to the collaborative process. I found that teachers at different developmental stages reacted differently to collaborative research methodologies, behaved differently in action research teams; thought differently about authority and leadership; conceived of change differently; and understood the goals and outcome of their research

differently. (For further information see Oja and Pine, 1983, 1984, 1988; Oja and Ham, 1984; and Oja and Smulyan, in progress.)

Issues Important in School-University Collaborative Research

I was left with a number of issues which are important to consider in collaborative research. I'd like to mention two of these issues today. The first issue is the relationship between school context and collaborative research. Several patterns seem to emerge from this issue, principles which may help guide future collaborative research efforts.

1) School climate may influence teachers' willingness to participate. It will certainly influence the questions they choose to ask, the data collection tools they use, the analysis they undertake, and the use they make of their findings.

2) Administrative support is need to legitimize and institutionalize the processes and products of collaborative research, but administrative participation on a team may interfere with the goals of the research.

3) Action research teams which work in isolation from the rest of their school may have a positive group and professional experience but they will be less likely to have an impact on school practice. Only by gradually involving colleagues in the process of collaborative research can a team influence policy and practice beyond (and sometimes even within) their own classrooms.

4) If collaborative research is to survive in schools once outside funding is withdrawn, participants must develop structures that allow the method and the products of the research to endure. Addressing issues of school climate and administrative and colleague involvement in collaborative research may be the first step in this process.

A second issue important in collaborative research involves questions of project control and leadership. From an examination of project control in a variety of collaborative action research projects, the following general principles emerge.

1) Funding agencies and school systems will continue to demand that projects have a focus before they begin. University participants need to meet with interested practitioners in advance, allowing them to have input into the project focus from the outset.

2) Any project focus or theme must be flexible enough to withstand the cycles of action research. Within these cycles, participants must be free to address immediate concerns and modify their actions and goals when observation and reflection suggest this is necessary.

3) University participants must be sensitive to the team needs, providing information and ideas when they will be useful to the group. Withholding information and ideas for fear of swaying the group seems contradictory to the collaborative process. yet, if information is to be seen as a contribution rather than a mandate, university participants have to establish a collegial, trusting relationship with the team that makes them a part of the democratic process.

For further discussion of issues important in school and university collaborative research projects, see Oja and Smulyan (1988). At this time there is a lot of information and guidance for those who wish to undertake school/university collaborative research. The newest set of references on school/university collaborative research will be found in two upcoming issues of The Peabody Journal of Education Volume 64 #1 and #2.

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT TO IMPROVE SUPERVISION

The most recent area of school and university collaboration in the Five-Year Teacher Education Program at the University of New Hampshire is the Collaborative Supervision project. In 1985 I became involved in a collaborative university-school effort to develop, refine, and extend the repertoire of supervisory skills and strategies for project principals, teachers, and university supervisors. This project was funded for three years by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education.

Program Content

In this project, participating teachers, principals, and university supervisors are introduced to three areas of research aimed at improving supervision: adult development stage theory, alternative models of supervision, and collaborative (action) research. With assistance from University faculty, project participants develop knowledge of the stages of adult development and alternative supervisory models which can be matched to the developmental stages of preservice teachers or peers. Principals use their new learnings with teachers as part of their role as instructional leaders; teachers use their learnings to supervise university fifth-year interns, student teachers, peers, or sophomores participating in an exploring teaching course; university supervisors use their new learnings to work more collaboratively with cooperating teachers. Participants are also encouraged to develop collaborative research projects that extend the applications of research knowledge and contribute to understanding the project's impact.

Instructional Processes

After a series of meetings of university faculty with principals, devoted to gaining new knowledge and skills in the cntent areas, each school formed a collaborative Teacher Supervision Group which met biweekly to study the new content areas in adult development and supervision. University faculty facilitated the meetings of teachers and principals in the Teacher Supervision Groups, each of which developed a model of ongoing supervision to support the university's field placement for preservice teachers. A cluster of 5-6 full year interns is placed in each school. The school's Supervision Group meets monthly with university faculty to discuss supervision and to share applications of their learnings.

Two models of supervision are being used. One school using a differentiated model has a cooperating teacher assume major responsibility for coordinating the teachers and interns within the school. This teacher organizes and facilitates weekly meetings of the cooperating teachers to discuss issues of supervision of the interns, and she has become a liason to the university supervisor. Another school using an egalitarian model has all cooperating teachers meeting as a group regularly with the university supervisor in order to address specific questions of intern supervison. In both models participating teachers take on greater supervision responsibility. Formerly, the major supervisory load for preservice teachers was carried out by the university faculty. Joint meetings of the interns and cooperating teachers are held in each school to create a support network for both interns and teachers. Several cooperating teachers and interns maintain reflective journals and complete supervisory logs to document behavior patterns and to facilitate

developmental analysis.

Features of the University's Collaboration with Schools

The project is truly a joint venture between the school district and university. The university has direct involvement in ongoing project activities because the Coordinator of Field Experiences and the university supervisors are members of a newly formed School-University Task Force for Improved Supervision. In addition, the project's coordinator at the university serves on the university Teacher Education Committee, linking the project with other activities of the teacher education faculty. Similarly in the schools; the project's coordinator in the school is an employee of the district, situated in one of the participating schools. Representatives of the teachers, principals, and university faculty serve on the School-University Task Force for Improved Supervision, with responsibility for the identification of supervisory competencies and the development of school-based models for cooperating teacher supervision. The Task Force aims at consensus in decision making, with each representative sharing their different areas of expertise and having an equal say.

University faculty have the opportunity for new learning as they share supervision responsibility with the cooperating teachers. Participating teachers are involved fully in all aspects of the project, including national dissemination. Teachers and principals in each school and the university supervisor develop a sense of collegiality and community as they meet together regularly to discuss supervisory processes. By working together in this way they build a communication network between the schools and university.

Products

A primary product of the project is an instrument for assessing supervisory competencies that is differentiated into competencies in adult development, instructional leadership, and collaboration. The instrument was designed by school and university personnel from one of the Teacher Supervision Groups and can be used as a self-assessment tool for supervising teachers as well as a means of monitoring the practices of supervisors.

Intended Outcomes

As a result of participation in this project, cooperating teachers, principals, and university faculty have knowledge of relevant research in the areas of adult development, supervision, and collaborative action research processes, and have an increased repertoire of alternative supervisory models. There will be alternative tested models for school-based supervision and linkage with university field experiences. There will be the establishment of a network of school and university contacts who will institutionalize successful project processes and goals.

For more detailed description of the Collaborative Supervision project, see Oja and Ham (1987) and Oja (1987).

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